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# THE BRITISH EMPIRE AFTER THE WAR

BY HON. CHARLES H. SHERRILL

DURING the Boer War, Mr. Lloyd George made himself unpopular in many quarters by favoring a generous policy towards those doughty foes, urging that it afforded the only sound basis for amicable relations after the victory. Recent events have strikingly vindicated the wisdom of his policy. It was chiefly to General Smuts, the former Boer leader and now Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, that Lloyd George owed the acceptance by Eamonn de Valera and the Dail Eireann of the British invitation to a conference at Number Ten Downing Street, the hub of the British Empire. It is a *secret de polichinelle* that when there assembled in London in June, 1921, the governmental chiefs of the several Dominions, among their very first recommendations was that early adjustment of the Irish problem be reached on almost any terms except the granting of absolute freedom to an Irish republic. This was especially urged by General Smuts and by Mr. Meighen, the Canadian Premier, and it does not require much Yankee guessing to conclude that it was to the former that Lloyd George turned for assistance in that crisis. It certainly was the South African General who went over to Dublin and conferred with Mr. de Valera and his friends, and was promptly followed back to London by the Irish chief, when there began the conferences which Lloyd George had thitherto been unable to arrange. Certain it is that General Smuts was the obvious man for that diplomatic task, not only as friendly recognition of the British statesman's pro-Boer attitude in the past, but also because he alone of all the Dominion leaders could say, "The British promised us, who are not British and who fought them, complete self-government, and they have kept their promise. You too are non-British, have fought them, and want self-government. Take my advice and come into conference with them for that purpose. We gained the end for which we fought

after we stopped fighting, and we believe that with our friendly coöperation, you can do the same." Lloyd George did not waste the political bread he threw upon (or across) the water during the Boer War. On the contrary, the British Empire would now seem to owe to it a possibility of composing the centuries-old Irish imbroglio.

Few statesmen's photographs depict the man so fairly as that of the stocky Boer, a leader like our own Washington—resourceful both in war and in a succeeding peace more strenuous than the fighting that gave it birth. Born in 1870 in South Africa, he completed his education begun there by taking a Double First Law Tripos at Christ's College, Cambridge. Knowing the English well, both as one who lived among them during impressionable student days and later as their foe in battle, he pays them the great compliment of trusting to their genius as Colonial administrators. As a lover of his South Africa, he realizes that interdependence with so strong an entity as the British Empire is better for the fortune of a country needing unlimited capital than an unaided independence. In 1906 he wrote, "Our strength lies not in isolation but in union." He has learned and typifies what it would be well for certain Philippine separatists, yearning to be lambs turned loose in the forest, carefully to ponder. Those who have sat with him in council, friends and foes alike, testify that he is apt to wait until the views of all the others have been advanced and the problem fully presented before offering his own suggestions thereon, which suggestions are generally so simple and effective as greatly to clarify the issue if not entirely to meet it.

A consideration of the personalities of Lloyd George and the other British Premiers who met with him between June 20 and August 5, 1921, affords as fair a way as any to envisage their handling of the great problem they there confronted: How is the after-war British Empire to do its business? It has functioned well in the past, and has recently safely weathered a dreadful crisis, but the new conditions demand new methods. Plainly, the enhanced significance within the Empire gained for the Dominions from their splendid aid to the Homeland during the war must be tangibly recognized. Not only is this felt in London,

as was proved by the invitation to assemble there addressed to those leaders of Greater Britain, but also the distant peoples themselves realize their new standing and require practical recognition thereof. No longer can a few eminent Londoners, elected to Parliament from districts in the British Isles outside as well as within London, notify the Dominions of actions taken by them upon matters affecting the entire Empire. No matter what else was settled at that conference, one thing is certain: The Dominions must hereafter be consulted before and not after decision by London upon imperial problems. It was impossible to see the Dominion Premiers, to say nothing of having speech with them, without coming to that conclusion.

As for their personalities, let us begin by noting that they are all typically Prime Ministers, obviously men who never forgot that they were responsible to their Parliaments at home, and that their leadership depended upon retaining their parliamentary majorities. In this they differed from our President and our Governors, who are elected for a definite period and therefore have so much time in which to develop a policy that may at its inception be unpopular, for they run no risk of losing office overnight as does a Prime Minister under the British parliamentary system. This means that the bold stand taken at this conference by certain of those leaders was really bolder than had it been taken by leaders under our system. But, passing on from the group to the individuals, all similarity ceases, for they were as different as possible. Two men could hardly be more unlike than the thin, wiry, active Mr. Meighen, he of the vast Canadian provinces, and the older and burlier Mr. Massey of New Zealand, smallest of the Dominions in population, and the only one with restricted geographical limitations. Mr. Massey, the farmer, has been in power a longer period than most Prime Ministers enjoy, over ten years, and has had a peculiarly well-rounded experience, serving as Minister of Lands and Labor, Agriculture and Commerce. Born in Ireland in 1856, he went out to New Zealand in 1870 to join his parents, who had emigrated a few years earlier with Nonconformist settlers. Equally different in appearance is the squarely built South African Dutchman, General Smuts, ardent in his defense of Imperial unity at home

as he is of Dominion rights abroad, from the slender, gaunt Mr. Hughes, the Australian Laborite, as hard of hearing as his opinions are hard to change.

Nevertheless, differing as are their personalities, all are statesmen of one type, *i.e.*, Ministers responsible alone to representative assemblies of their own people. That is exactly what the British Prime Minister used to be before the war, when he had only the majority in his London Parliament to consider. But is it still the case with Mr. Lloyd George to-day? Has not his responsibility broadened? His personality seems to say so to the average American student of any political experience. A great national crisis would appear to have developed his high office into a sort of Presidency of Greater Britain. Certain is it that he no longer needs frequently to attend sessions of Parliament, as used to be necessary. Talking with him on the terrace of Number Ten Downing Street, his official residence, just outside the conference room in which were assembling those other British Premiers come hither to this centre of the British web from over thousands of ocean miles, one could not but feel that his relation to them had become similar to that of an American President to the Legislative and Judicial branches of our Government; that "the advice and consent" of these men has now become necessary to him, rather than that he should satisfy only his coalition majority at Westminster.

The Lloyd George one talks with is a very different man from him of whom one reads in the cabled news. The first impression is that of physical strength and alertness, a quick change of pose unusual in a Britisher, well shown in Sir William Goscombe John's admirable bust of him. As he talks, he steps away and back again, now advancing one shoulder and now the other, the in-and-out action of a trained boxer. Almost always the head leans away from you, just as Colonel Roosevelt's was apt to do, which lends an impression of greater height; but Lloyd George's head generally inclines to one side or the other, which Roosevelt's did not. Roosevelt made his points by suddenly leaning toward his man and baring his teeth, but Lloyd George makes his by leaning back and screwing up his eyes, the better to observe how you take him. His physical action in no way denotes that he is a

golfer, and yet that game is a great passion with him. America is not the only country where it is politically wise to be a golf playmate of the Executive! One of Lloyd George's most intimate friends, (the owner and editor of *The News of the World*, a weekly with 3,000,000 circulation,) was raised by him to the peerage as Lord Riddell of Walton Heath, taking his title from the links of that name where they golfed together, and thither L. G. (as he is frequently called) repairs for his favorite sport whenever cares of office permit.

He spoke to me in the highest terms of the behavior of the Boers at the close of the South African war, when in good faith they accepted the British invitation to a conference behind the lines with Kitchener and Roberts, and then thereafter "carried on" with equal loyalty, especially since the government of their country had been completely given over to them by their military conquerors. Spoken just when it was, on June 29, 1921, it seemed a background for the Irish reluctance then to accept a similar invitation to confer with him in London. He asked straightforward, significant questions about American public opinion upon different points, but it must be admitted those questions indicated that notwithstanding his gratifying interest in our views he knew little of our general desire that decent settlement be made of the Irish controversy. Indeed, Mr. Meighen, the Canadian Premier, remarked later, while giving hearty endorsement to Lloyd George's earnest desire to be informed upon American public opinion, "They have the best of intentions toward America, but London does not understand America's point of view."

None of the visiting Colonial statesmen made such an impression upon the British metropolis as this Canadian, not only upon officialdom but also upon the man in the street; "It's only because they have seen the other fellows before," was his modest disclaimer. It was generally believed that it was Mr. Meighen's insistence added to General Smuts's that the Irish question be settled, that caused Lloyd George's written invitation to Eamonn de Valera, the Sinn Fein leader of the South, and Sir James Craig, the Ulster chief, for a conference in London. Born in Anderson, Ontario, in 1874, and graduated with honors in mathe-

matics from Toronto University in 1896, Mr. Meighen farmed, taught school, and what not, for four years, when he turned to the law. In 1908, then thirty-four years old, he entered the Dominion Parliament, and proceeding upward through one political office after another, always as a friend of Sir Robert Borden, became in 1920 Canadian Prime Minister and Secretary for Foreign Affairs. His face is thoughtful, and his appearance reflects itself in the happy selection of words for which his speeches are widely known.

Just as Mr. Meighen with General Smuts led the demand for an Irish settlement, so Messrs. Meighen and Hughes are believed to have led that against the renewing of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in any shape that might offend America. It is generally understood, however, that Mr. Meighen went much further than Mr. Hughes, and favored dropping that alliance altogether. In this second matter, of course, General Smuts and his people are too far distant from the Pacific Ocean to feel the effect of Japanese economic penetration, and cannot be expected to realize why Australia is perforce unanimous for the "White Australia" policy. Although Mr. Meighen is uncommunicative to a foreigner upon his official views regarding this purely Pacific question, he did not hesitate to ask if Americans did not think that America would have joined the Allies earlier in the Great War if there had been no Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Mr. Hughes, not only a lawyer at home but also a member of Gray's Inn, London, made a world-wide name for himself at the Versailles Peace Conference. He knew exactly what Australia had to have, and also just what she meant to have omitted from the conference's decisions, and in both these regards he made himself not only heard but, in the end, listened to. Born in Wales in 1864, he went out to Australia in 1884 and has been its Prime Minister since 1915. He was prepared for that leadership by many years of service in the Australian Parliament and Cabinet, so that he was excellently equipped for his successful efforts in Paris. All the Dominion Premiers have been honored not only by the English Government and municipal bodies but also by honorary degrees from the universities, of which Mr. Hughes has received five. Sometimes these distinctions prove hurtful

at home by exciting local jealousies; all politicians are not so quick as was Sir George Reid, the former Australian Prime Minister, who upon returning home after being made a K. C. M. G. replied, when asked its meaning by an Opposition newspaper reporter, "It only means, Keep Calling Me George!"

We are accustomed to speak of Prime Ministers as heads of representative governments, but perhaps without realizing how representative of their average constituents they perforce must be. If these dignitaries were not of a type approved each by his own people, they would not be where they are. For that reason we may safely say that a sight of their portraits and even a fleeting glimpse of the personalities representing the various British Dominions can usefully enlighten us upon that important international question, Whither is the British Empire tending?

In Paris one meets many people, some of them high up, who maintain that such an imperial conference as that of London can only mean the parting of the ways, that the Dominions are about to split off as did the Americans in 1776. Such people forget that the rulers of Great Britain to-day are not so narrow-minded as were Lord North and George III. It is not at a parting of the ways that these Premiers met under the Presidency of the British Prime Minister. The crossroads were passed when the Colonials rallied in men and money to the British front in Flanders and Gallipoli. They are now well beyond, proceeding along a straight highway side by side. But at those crossroads, now passed, those very Colonials, by their gallant and brotherly conduct, ceased to be Colonials and became as full brothers in government as they had been in arms; they shed their Colonial citizenship to become partners in Empire. It was significant how their Premiers flared up when a certain London newspaper suggested that Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the Colonies, should preside at their conference! Those leaders, only Colonial Ministers before the War, have since then become real Prime Ministers.

Nor is the change come only to them. For he who before 1914 was Prime Minister of the British Empire, responsible only to a Parliament controlled by Londoners sitting in London, must now govern "by and with the advice of" the Dominion partners,



just as an American President must realize that along with the Executive our Constitution gives recognition to the Legislative and Judicial branches of our Government. One may safely conclude that one so alert-minded as Lloyd George appreciates this change. In fact it is indicated by his selection as private secretary of that gallant Guardsman, Sir Edward Grigg, especially well informed upon Colonial affairs, to succeed Philip Kerr, specialist in foreign affairs, upon the latter's resignation last spring. Britain has now time to devote to imperial adjustments which were necessarily neglected during the life-and-death war struggle that demanded intensive vigilance in external affairs. More will be heard later of Philip Kerr. Heir to the Marquis of Lothian, he founded that brilliant quarterly *The Round Table*, devoted to broadening and enlightening British public opinion upon imperial questions. His is too keen and too active a brain to remain long in idleness, greatly as he needed a vacation after his years of exacting service under Lloyd George in Downing Street during and after the war.

So much for the changed way in which the business of governing the British Empire seems to be conducted; and now for another factor without which the picture would be far from complete. It is the fashion for British public speakers the world over to describe the Crown as the golden thread that binds the Empire together. But is it not something both more and less than that? Let us follow the trend of public thought nowadays and apply the touchstone of metaphysics to the Crown's influence. More and more are we coming to realize the difference between things material and those purely spiritual. While the Crown retains the outward pomp of matter, it has lost the material power; that has passed back to the people and is wielded by their elected and selected representatives. But the Crown's hold on the spirit of the people is as strong as ever it was, and of late years it has more than once demonstrated its power of service to the country. Particularly has the personality of the Prince of Wales, through his widely won popularity, demonstrated this. The combination of his frank youth and simple directness of manner has proved irresistible. He has won the confidence of his people on the home islands and around the Seven Seas, and his well-

wishers are not all compatriots. How will he use this great asset? In what direction will the Crown develop? Time alone will show. But since it is already the fashion to remark that in many respects he is very like his grandfather, King Edward VII, it is useful to consider what sort of a sovereign the latter proved himself. The time has come to recognize that he was one of the great Kings of English history. Long kept in the background by his royal mother, and coming to the throne at the advanced age of sixty, he soon showed that he had not been wasting his years of preparation. Mr. Strachey, in his remarkable life of Queen Victoria, makes it clear that Prince Albert Edward was considered somewhat of a trial to his parents, differing so entirely from his meticulously industrious German father. When the Prince of Wales came to the throne in January, 1901, he set his wise heart upon an Anglo-French alliance as the only practical defense against the rapidly developing policy of *Deutschland über Alles*. Notwithstanding the unpopularity of his plan (because its need was not understood), he brought to pass the new international alliance, which success of his diplomacy, in the light of subsequent events, is seen to be one of the most notable contributions by an English king to his people's welfare.

A few months since, George V and Queen Mary went to Ireland and opened the Ulster Parliament, against the advice of wise counsellors who felt that they risked their lives thereby. Indeed, so general was the belief in the danger they insisted upon running that even the Sinn Fein Irish of the south admired their courage; for you can always trust an Irishman to recognize pluck. With such parents and such a grandfather, the young Prince of Wales is shown to be after all only carrying forward a tradition of service by the Crown to the British people, without which its government would not, from the standpoint of a metaphysician, be complete. The new adjustment reached by the conference of Dominion Premiers under the presidency of the British Prime Minister will materially govern the Empire, while the Crown, with its hold upon the spirit of the people, will do its part in holding them together.

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